

JUN 17 1938

DRAMA

A MONTHLY RECORD OF THE THEATRE
IN TOWN AND COUNTRY
AT HOME & ABROAD



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DRAMA

VOL 16

JUNE, MCMXXXVIII

NUMBER 9

THE JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE

PLAYS OF THE MONTH

By W. A. Darlington

I HAVE been feeling a little melancholy just lately, and have not known the cause. I knew it was not my health, because I have been quite well, thank you. Nor was it that awful business of the income-tax returns, because I have been too busy to fill mine in, and shall probably be in prison by the time these words are in print. Nor was it the weather. Not until I sat down to write this account of a month's play-going did I find out what it was. For weeks and weeks I have hardly seen a good new play.

Really, now I come to look at it, this has been a terrible month. St. John Ervine's "People of Our Class," at the New Theatre, has been the only serious play of any quality, and that is not quite up to Mr. Ervine's best form. It is an examination into the class-consciousness of the upper and middle classes in a small town in Devonshire. The General's daughter cannot find a satisfactory mate in her own walk of life, so she gets engaged to the butcher's son. The General is displeased. So is the butcher, and for the same reason. Neither father thinks the other's child is good enough. They join in a conspiracy to cut off supplies; the children counter by announcing a baby which must be legitimised. Point, game and set to the children.

Mr. Ervine is a born story teller, and this tale moves. It is excellently acted, too, especially by Nicholas Hannen, Mary Jerrold, James Harcourt and Ursula Jeans. It does not move our emotions, however, and that is why the play does not take rank with its author's best. Also, he writes of the outspoken younger generation with a lack of sympathy which suggests lack of knowledge. In the theatre on the first night one heard

impassioned parents protesting that Mr. Ervine has laid on the younger generation's vulgarity and bad manners much too thick. I think he has, too. Mr. Ervine as a social critic can damn the younger generation as heartily as he pleases, but Mr. Ervine as a dramatist ought to have sympathy with all his characters while he is creating them. So, at least, I have always believed.

What else? Well, almost literally nothing else. A pleasant little play of some promise, "April Clouds," had a very short run at the Royalty. A silly little play, "Three Blind Mice" was rather rashly transferred from the Embassy and had a very short run at the Duke of York's. A perfectly ridiculous little play, "Married Unanimously," came to the Phoenix and had the shortest of runs. Another negligible little play, "Lady with Designs," made very little impression at the Ambassadors. "Money Talks," a play from the French with a good satirical idea, was put on at the Lyceum by Seymour Hicks, but that too came off very promptly.

Stay, though—there is one bright spot in the gloomy chronicle—"Banana Ridge," at the Strand. In this piece, Ben Travers returns to his proper business of fitting good comedians with funny material, from which he has absented himself without leave too long. Mr. Travers's old friend Robertson Hare and his newer friend Alfred Drayton are in fine form here as little bald victim and big bald tough, and for good measure Mr. Travers throws in himself in his first stage part as a native servant, jabbering Malay at a most impressive speed and looking an unconscionable villain.

The event of the month was certainly a

PLAYS OF THE MONTH

revival—the production of “The Merchant of Venice” which John Gielgud put on at the Queen’s. Much argument has been heard about this. Some do not agree with Mr. Gielgud’s way of playing Shylock (I don’t). Some do not like “Motley’s” setting (I do). But everybody agrees that it is a fine piece of work, and a fitting culmination for the most interesting and exciting managerial venture of the year. Peggy Ashcroft’s Portia is enchanting at Belmont, though she lacks something of importance when she comes to Venice. Angela Baddeley’s Nerissa gives a new quality to a part not usually very rewarding. The whole company that Mr. Gielgud has gathered round him is so good that he must not think of breaking it up.

So much, alas, for home products. But on the very last day of the period under review came an exciting importation—the Lunts at the Lyric in “Amphitryon 38.” This play is a modern French version of the old Greek legend, how Zeus became the lover of Alkmene by impersonating her husband Amphitryon; and I doubt if it amounts to more than an elegant and sophisticated trifle. But Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt, whose concerted acting is one of the loveliest things the modern theatre has evolved, carry it off so brilliantly that it almost seems a masterpiece. The Lunts’ acting is almost impossible to think of except in terms of music, so exact is the harmony of speech and gesture.

THE FESTIVAL AT GLASGOW

THE Final in the British Drama League Annual Festival of Community Drama was held at the Theatre Royal, Glasgow, on Monday evening, May 30th, and proved an unqualified success. Every seat in the vast theatre was occupied, and as reported in the “Glasgow Herald”, “a spirit of excitement prevailed, noticeable in the tremendous hum of conversation during the intervals and this increased to quite feverish pitch as the adjudicators, copying the Chancellor’s trick on Budget Day, delayed announcing their award till the last possible moment.”

The adjudicators were Miss Marie Ney, Mr. James Bridie and Mr. Norman Marshall. The teams were placed in the following order:

1. Midland Bank Dramatic Society in “Count Albany” by Donald Carswell. (Eastern Area). Winners of the Lord Howard de Walden Cup.
2. Ardeer Recreation Club in “In the Zone,” by Eugene O’Neill. (Scotland).
3. Bristol Drama Club in “Two Gentlemen of Soho,” by A. P. Herbert. (Western Area).
4. Holme Valley Comedy Players in “T’Second Time of Asking,” by George Taylor. (Northern Area).
5. Blackwood Dramatic Society in “The Sixth Hour,” by Wilfrid Grantham. (Wales).

Mr. Norman Marshall, who acted as chief spokesman for the adjudicators’ panel, introduced his remarks by alluding to the lack of new one-act plays of high dramatic value. It was noticeable, he pointed out, that three out of the five plays in the final were over ten years old and had been written by professional and experienced hands. It was apparent that teams of high standard preferred

the well-made old play to the ineffective new one.

The performances of the first two plays in the programme, “T’Second Time of Asking” and “The Sixth Hour” showed a satisfactory competence both of acting and production, but at the lift of the curtain upon “In the Zone” (again to quote the “Glasgow Herald”) “the interest of the audience quickened, and until the fall of the curtain at the end of ‘Count Albany’ a very high level was maintained.”

The Howard de Walden Cup was handed to the winning team by Lord Inverclyde after Mr. Bridie and Miss Marie Ney had each added a few words to Mr. Marshall’s summing-up.

The South Western Division of the Scottish Community Drama Association were responsible for the arrangement of the Final on behalf of the League, and Mr. Laing and his colleagues are to be congratulated on a fine piece of Festival organisation. The hospitality of the Committee included an enjoyable “informal gathering” on the Sunday evening, and the presence of Dr. Gordon Bottomley, the Hon. President of the Scottish Community Drama Association, added much to the pleasure of the visitors throughout the Festival. When speaking at the Theatre Royal, he alluded to the friendly relations now existing between the drama movement in England and Scotland.

For the best original play in the Competition the award was made to the “Apple Tree” by Miss Richardson of Broomhill Congregational Church, Glasgow.

THE NATIONAL THEATRE

A Statement By John Masfield

IT is now forty years 'since I first read the suggestion that there should be a National Theatre in London. The suggestion was probably not then new; it may have been going on for half-a-century; but it was new to me. In every year of the forty since then, some man of genius has written or said that there should be one, or more than one, or even one in every city in England. In some years, the newspapers have clamoured for one. There have been leading articles; there have been letters and able appeals signed by the eminent. These clamours have always died down after a time. We have continued to do without the National Theatre; but with a growing feeling, that possibly, something sometimes connected with beauty and wisdom might, conceivably, not bring utter moral degradation, nor business ruin, nor physical destruction of our Empire's citizens.

Forty years ago the lovers of literature hoped that a National Theatre might be founded, so that they might see, as a part of the general culture of mankind, not only the thirty or forty dramatic masterpieces of the world, but the kindling works of the changers of mental fashion, the dynamic men of their own passing decade of any country in the world. The existing theatres could not or did not perform these masterpieces, not yet those

"Seventy disciples sent

Against Religion and Government"

having other game in hand. Those lovers of literature had to do without such things, or go abroad for them or to wait until some school or amateur body performed one of them as well as it could under such direction as it had.

Forty years ago, young writers and thinkers hoped, that a National Theatre might be founded having within its walls, as a part of its equipment, one or two little experimental theatres in which young men, with an interest in the theatre, might learn their craft with all its branches, and try out their crude plays with fellow students. The existing theatre could not grant these aids. How could it? The young men, therefore, had to do as they could, with much waste of time and energy, and often with the stunted sense of design which comes from the want of noble models.

In these last few years, England has woken from her sleep. The soul of the land, once so thrillingly alive to beauty, wisdom and the arts of joy, is alive once more. We are to have a National Theatre. Let me wish it all happy fortune. At the worst, it will rouse an excellence of opposition. I wish it the best. May it be a home of noble art, while the Nation endures.

NATIONAL THEATRE SEAT ENDOWMENT SCHEME.

It is intended to raise the sum of £100,000 towards the building and equipment of the National Theatre by the endowment of seats in the Theatre at £100 each. Endowments may be taken out in the name of places, institutions, or eminent persons connected with the Drama. Sir William Davison has already endowed a seat in the name of the Royal Borough of Kensington, and more than twenty other London Boroughs are now organising appeals. Among individual endowments already made or promised are the following:—

Sir Henry Irving (Sir John Martin Harvey).
Sir Philip Ben Greet (Mr. Bannister Howard and friends).
Ellen Terry (Mr. Harcourt Williams).
Sir Edward Elgar (Miss Harriet Cohen and friends)
Lady Tree (Miss Viola Tree).
Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson (Lady Forbes-Robertson).
Sir Nigel Playfair (Miss Oriol Ross and friends).
Clement Scott (Lord Camrose).
J. T. Grein (Lord Kemsley).
William Roxby Beverley (Mr. and Mrs. Owen Nares).
John Ford (Mr. Clifford Bax).
Ben Jonson (Mr. Barrow Cadbury).
Henrik Ibsen (Mrs. Eriksen and friends).
Dr. Ludwig Mond (Sir Robert Mond).
Mrs. Freida Wood (Sir Robert Mond).
Sir Israel Gollancz (Two Friends).
Sir Max Muspratt (Lady Muspratt).
David Garrick (Mr. Anmer Hall).
Canon and Mrs. A. J. W. Thorndike (Dame Sybil Thorndike).
Edward Bulwer Lytton (The Earl of Lytton).
C. E. Montague (The Manchester Guardian).
Geoffrey Whitworth (Anonymous).
Sir Charles Hawtrey (Lord Portal).
The Casson-Thorndike Family (The Altrincham Garrick Society).

Concluded on page 143.

THE STAGE AS A CAREER

By Kenneth Barnes

Principal of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art

The following address was read at the opening of the recent Course on "Drama in the School" organised by the League at King's College, Kensington.

I HAVE been asked to make some comment on the Stage as a career. The word "career" is a curious one—it has an extended meaning. It denotes, in one sense, "a course through life"; and in another "a way of making a livelihood."

The first aspect is the more attractive; it signifies career as an end in itself, and not merely as a means to the end of earning a livelihood. It is the aspect dear to youth; when the spirit of adventure is unfettered by facts of personal experience, and when the experience of others is held not to apply to oneself. There is a great deal to be said for it. The human being, who has never tried to hitch his or her wagon to a star, is the poorer for it. To try, and to fail, is better than not to try at all.

If the career of the stage is regarded, as a wise parent may think it ought to be, merely as a way to making a livelihood, it cannot be said to satisfy requirements. In this the stage is not singular, but resembles other artistic professions; and, like them, it offers the same compensation for the precariousness of its remuneration. Those, who choose one of the Arts for their main occupation in life, are presumably giving their time and energy to what they want to do, instead of to some obviously utilitarian work, which they feel would prove irksome to them, however useful it might be to others. When we determine to do what we want to do and follow the course of adventure, we undertake to be responsible for our own actions. Every free choice exercised entails a fresh responsibility; and if the choice is the stage and the responsibility the earning of a livelihood, the issue is, to say the least, hazardous. So it comes about that the career of the stage is regarded as a good one when it succeeds, and as a rotten one when it fails. The wise parent is apt to forgive the wilful child, who wins through in the face of discouragement and becomes, in his view, the exception which proves the rule;

for it cannot be gainsaid that the stage is a profession, to which many seem to be called, but few are chosen.

What then are the qualities, which fit the young man or woman to succeed in the struggle for a career on the stage? First, I think we must put natural aptitude, or the possession of the kind of character and temperament, which by nature desires to express itself dramatically. This quality, which—if it is not there at the start—neither training can teach nor experience bring out, let us call "empiric imagination." But there are many who feel they have this temperamental quality of imagination, but who either have it not strongly enough to transform their physical personalities into a medium for expressing their feelings dramatically, or, who have not sufficient character to exercise the patient application necessary for this transformation to operate. I have used the word "transformation," because, although acting is expression through an individual self, it is not the direct expression of that self, but of another imagined self; and demands the use of every faculty of the personality—heart, brain, and body. What we call "personality" in life exists in some degree in everyone, without any effort on our part. It is the undefinable "something", which makes us individuals differ one from another; but the development of this personality into an effective agent of artistic dramatic expression presupposes a strong sense of self-determination and continual exercise of the will—and it is this quality of self-determination and will power that I consider the second most important asset for the actor and actress. Thirdly, I put sensitive feeling, because acting is fundamentally the expression and interpretation of human emotions. I do not regard sensitive feeling as an innate quality like imagination, but as a cultured quality. So many of us are sensitive about the wrong things, and it is only through education and experience that we learn to be sensitive about the things that matter and not to mind the others. If an actor has a strong imagination, but does not take the trouble



Photo: Van Damm

ALFRED LUNT AS "JUPITER" AND RICHARD WHORF AS "MERCURY" IN THE NEW YORK THEATRE GUILD PRODUCTION OF "AMPHITRYON 38" BY JEAN GIRAUDOUX. This play has lately been produced by the same company at the Lyric Theatre, London.



THE DRINKING SCENE FROM "TWELFTH NIGHT" AS PRODUCED IN MODERN DRESS BY THE SLOANE SCHOOL, CHELSEA.

THE STAGE AS A CAREER

to cultivate sensitive feeling rightly, his acting will fail to achieve the intimate and moving touch demanded by an audience. Fourthly, I suggest the importance of appearance, because in dramatic Art inner feelings can only be expressed through the outer appearance—so that everyone, before deciding to go on the stage, should attempt to make an honest conjecture as to whether the appearance is likely to help or hinder the ambition. I do not mean that beauty of appearance should be taken as a hall-mark of suitability for a stage career, but that a kind of interesting mobility of expression, in form and feature, is in nearly all cases essential. A fifth quality, which is necessary, is a voice to which people will want to listen; and speech that is not merely audible, but gives the true meaning to language. This quality can be cultivated, by some with great difficulty, by others more easily; and I do not think that voice and speech have a psychological connection with the innate quality for dramatic expression. Many people speak beautifully, but are undramatic in their utterance; and some poets think that dramatic intensity in speech spoils the lyrical effect of their poetry, which, in their view, depends not on expression, but on vocal sound.

The problem for the many who feel themselves called to attempt a career on the stage, is to discover whether they are sufficiently endowed with talent—by which I mean that quality which cannot be taught; and with perseverance—by which I mean determination to learn what can be taught. I am afraid it is inevitable that the Head of a School of Acting should recommend a course of training as the most practical means of solving this problem. There are so many, who do not know until they try, what their powers and what their limitations are. A good training is able to sharpen the senses and stimulate the consciousness, so that the intelligent student may know the aim ahead and the necessity of technique for achieving it.

In a good school the student will have the opportunity of working with others immersed in the same adventure—of feeling the strain of competition; and the demands made on every faculty, mental and physical, in the shaping of the personality into an effective agent for acting. Voice has to be cultivated, as an instrument that responds adequately to the emotions. Speech, as vehicle for the beauty of language, and interpretation of

character—Movement, as a significant faculty with meaning in its rhythm—the gestures of the body, as expressions of instinct, more spontaneous than language. Hearing, to discern the slightest variation of tone and inflection. Mimetic faculty—to reproduce effects when they have been assimilated. Memory—to become an aid and not a hindrance; and, above all, Imagination, the live-wire of dramatic art, has to be cultivated to do what is required of it, which is to seize upon and hold the imagination of the audience.

I am aware that those, who hear these comments, have come to gather knowledge as Teachers, and how the Drama may best be used in schools; but the subject I have been asked to deal with is the Professional Stage as a career, as you may be called upon to advise your pupils as to their eligibility for such a career. May I say that I consider it unwise to offer any advice on this matter if you are not specially asked for it; unless you feel that you have come across that rare specimen—a GENIUS, unaware of his or her own inspiration. There are many who have no genius, and yet are determined to use their energy in acting; and, when that determination is sustained, they may overcome the difficulties and succeed. But a teacher can sometimes detect the motive which lies at the back of this desire to act—and the motive is important, because it is a kind of reflection of the future. It may be a genuine feeling of talent and urge for dramatic expression; or it may be mainly a desire for the direct expression of sex, and so for excitement and publicity; or merely the running away from another career, which is proposed; or from home ties! No harm can be done by pointing out difficulties and pitfalls, and noting the reaction to this rather depressing kind of advice.

I believe the best age for stage training to be from 16 to 18—when it takes the place of a finishing school; and, if it does not lead to success, it is not too late to take up some other work. In giving advice I think teachers should ascertain, whether the pupil will be entirely dependent on earnings, or whether the parents can see them through, when hard times come. There are good scholarships at the R.A.D.A. and at other schools for which pupils can enter, and which will serve as an indication of sufficient aptitude. And may I say one last word to you as teachers. When teaching through Dramatic Presentation is

THE STAGE AS A CAREER

regarded by the school and the teacher as superficial, or as merely an effort at make-believe, rather than as an effort to express, in an appropriate manner, the real emotions, with which our human nature is charged, it becomes useless. To act well is to work; and like all other work, acting requires patience and concentration for achievement. The large subject of Acting, as an occupation for

leisure time, I must leave untouched; but all of us, who are teachers, realise its value in this respect. If I am asked whether the Stage is an immoral Profession, I have no hesitation in replying that intrinsically it is not; and I think it brings out the finer qualities in human nature. But all life is surrounded by temptation in one form or another—and some have the power to resist, and others have not.

AN AMATEUR THEATRE AT BUENOS AIRES

By Rupert Croft-Cooke

ONE would suppose that a city like Buenos Aires, with two and a half million inhabitants and an opera season which surpasses any other in the southern hemisphere, would have a theatre which could at least be called flourishing. One would have visualised the plays of Martínez Sierra supremely well done, a few excellent productions of Calderón and Lope de Vega, and perhaps some interesting plays by Argentine writers. It is disappointing to find it depending on the worst traditions of Spanish revue,—and everyone who knew pre-revolutionary Spain remembers how ineffectual and monotonous that was—with a few undistinguished revivals of the classics and some quite unoriginal *gaucho* plays as the only variation. Argentina never shared that regeneration of the theatre which other Latin countries have known in the last ten or twenty years.

But while I was out there a few months ago, I was introduced to an organisation which, I think, justifies one in hoping that a new movement may come about. This was called the *Teatro del Pueblo* (the People's Theatre). It had been founded and was still ruled by a señor Leónidas Barletta, whose reputation with his company was that of a ruthless martinet, completely devoted to his work, who had carried the whole enterprise on his shoulders by a discipline little short of monastic.

There were thirty-one members of the company, who all worked voluntarily. Rehearsals for new productions were usually held *after* the evening's performance, a system which only becomes credible when one remembers that as a city Buenos Aires never sleeps, and its streets are still crowded when the

tired actors eventually leave the little theatre at three or four o'clock in the morning. They all have their own jobs during the day, but probably give as long to their work at the theatre as the average professional English repertory actor gives. So far as the productions are concerned, these actors were strictly anonymous, it being a principle of the *Teatro del Pueblo* that no artist's name should appear on the programme.

The theatre itself is extremely simple, but adequate. There has been no lavish expense on seating or decoration, the walls are panelled with light sack-cloth, and the decoration deliberately crude and in reaction to the rococo splendours of other Buenos Aires theatres. The stage, however, is, in proportion, large and well-lit, and the director told me that he has never had any difficulty in obtaining the loan of all the furniture he needs, while he has his own artists and electricians, honorary like the caste.

What was really surprising in an enterprise of this sort, was the really high standard of production. It was as slick and polished as that of a successful commercial play in London or New York. There was absolutely none of that sense of embarrassment one feels at some amateur performances, when one is forced to think how good it is, *considering*. The *Teatro del Pueblo* asks for no concession in criticism, and needs none.

Last year it produced nine classics, four modern plays, and four plays by modern Argentine writers. Among the first were "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "Twelfth Night," three plays by Cervantes, one by Gogol and one by Lope de Vega. The best

AN AMATEUR THEATRE AT BUENOS AIRES

of the second was O'Neill's "Emperor Jones" which I saw while I was there. The conception was a Latin one, a little more highly coloured than O'Neill can have intended, with rather more emphasis on the grotesque than on the human aspects of the thing, but a thoroughly creditable production, all the same.

Of the modern Argentine plays I saw only one, not wholly inappropriately (I must own) named "Tedium" by Nicolas Olivari. There were only three characters, but the first scene, in which two men who have been isolated together at a lonely outpost in the *Chaco* exchange their reminiscences and ambitions, was lively and convincing.

For all these plays the company made their

own costumes, painted their own scenery, sold their own tickets, and did it out of their working hours. They were drilled and reprimanded by their indomitable (but fundamentally popular) director, and they were given little support or encouragement by the Argentine press. Yet they have made a dual success of their theatre, artistic and financial, so that they were speaking when I left of producing "St. Joan" in the new building they hope this year to construct. And when one remembers that the Argentine as a cinema fan leaves us, and all Europeans, far behind, and thinks of the theatre chiefly as a place in which to see a poor and picaresque revue, that seems a pretty considerable achievement.

AN EXPERIMENT IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DRAMA

By Carl Willmott

There is nothing new in the Dramatic method of education, or in the school concert where scenes and playlets form a part of the programme. The re-organisation of our elementary schools opens the possibilities for something much more ambitious, the new Senior Schools, unhampered by slavery to an external examination and frequently possessing both hall and platform may become cradles of dramatic life.

Many such experiments have been conducted at Mangotsfield Senior Boys' School,—situated on the outskirts of Bristol. It was built by the Gloucestershire Education Authority and opened in 1933. Since that date three productions have been undertaken annually.

Every Form in the School has one Drama lesson per week, and the most promising actors are drafted into the School Dramatic Society which presents a full-length play at Christmas. Most of us are familiar with the old system of "getting up" a school play,—with about three weeks as a maximum period of preparation. At Mangotsfield work is started as early as July for performance in December.

A ply-wood proscenium and all stage furniture have been manufactured in the school workshops. We have also made a permanent set with three arches to facilitate scene-changing on our very small stage. The arches can easily be backed by single flats—painted in the Art Room—and draped with the dove-grey curtains purchased out of our profits. With this minimum stage equipment and simple lighting we have produced "The Merchant of Venice," "Twelfth Night," "The Rose and the Ring" (from Thackeray), and "She Stoops to Conquer"—as well as many one-act plays. At least four performances of each have been given.

As this is not a co-educational school, all female parts have to be played by boys. There are disad-

vantages in this, but at least it can be said that boys have to act under such circumstances where a girl might merely "behave."

On leaving the day-school, pupils can continue to indulge their enthusiasm for acting by joining the Junior evening-class for boys and girls under sixteen. Upon attaining that age they may transfer to the adult class which completes our scheme of dramatic education.

Both these evening classes have annual productions between Christmas and Easter. Last year the seniors attempted a three-act play for the first time (Ian Hay's "Tilly of Bloomsbury").

At Easter we successfully presented Mordaunt Sharp's "The Crime at Blossoms."

It is my very earnest ambition that in time, this school may make a more creative contribution to the amateur dramatic movement. An original play giving some expression of our local life is a very difficult task—as it is an area partly urban, and partly rural. Last year we made a start in this direction by putting on an entirely new one-act play,—"The Witch of Siston" by John C. Woodiwiss. At present we are working out the details of "A Saturday Entertainment Parade"—a caricature of the various ways in which a Bristolian may find amusement.

We are proud of our membership of the British Drama League and make use of all its facilities. We look forward to the day when all youthful play-acting efforts will be brought to a head in a National Festival of School Drama.

The following Society is ready to try out new and original plays:

The Edinburgh Society of Playreading and Dramatic Art: Mr. W. P. Tait, 31, Grange Road, Edinburgh.

BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE NOTES



THE JOURNAL OF
THE BRITISH DRAMA LEAGUE
INCORPORATING
THE VILLAGE DRAMA SOCIETY

President :

LORD HOWARD DE WALDEN

Chairman of the Council :

VISCOUNT ESHER

Director : GEOFFREY WHITWORTH.

Hon. Treasurer : ALEC L. REA.

MSS. for publication in DRAMA will be considered if accompanied by stamps for return if unsuitable. All enquiries should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary at the Office of the League, 9, Fitzroy Square, London, W.1.

Telephone : EUSTON 2666.

Neither the Editor nor the Drama League as a whole accepts any responsibility for the opinions expressed in signed articles printed in this Journal.

ON another page we print, together with an article by Mr. John Masefield on the National Theatre, the first list of donations of £100 received under the Seat Endowment Scheme. We particularly draw attention to the endowment of a seat in the name of the Casson-Thorndike Family by the Altrincham Garrick Society, for this is of much significance as showing the response of an amateur dramatic organisation, situated far from London, to the appeal. It is evidence that the National Theatre is not an enterprise which concerns only Londoners, but that its desirability can be recognised by all those wherever situated who have the good of the theatre at heart. It is of course true that one of the main objects of the Theatre, when in being, will be to arrange for tours by the National Theatre Company, but quite apart from this, the generosity of the Altrincham Garrick Society deserves to be widely known and honoured as a most public-spirited act. It will be seen also that both Liverpool and Hereford will figure as responsible for seat endowments. No wide appeal has yet been made for the help of the Provinces, but any of our readers who are interested should apply for full particulars to the Secretary of the National Theatre, 50, Pall Mall, London, S.W.1.

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"The Amateur Theatre" has recently published a suggestion in regard to a National Three-Act Play Festival which will naturally arouse a great deal of interest. The Council of the League has now given some consideration to the matter, and has intimated its readiness to investigate the practicability of the scheme. The Northern Area of the Drama League has already been empowered to launch a Three-Act Play Festival in its own district under the auspices of the League, and any decision as to the larger Festival will have to be made in the light of that experiment. Meanwhile, as recorded on another page, our One-Act Play Festival has come to a splendid conclusion at Glasgow. We wish we could have dealt at greater length with this event, but the exigencies of publication have made it difficult to include even such a "stop press" description as we have been able to print in this Number.

The British Drama League is as usual running two Summer Schools this year. The August School, under the Patronage of the Princess Royal, will be at Queen Margaret's School, Scarborough, where it was held in 1934. This course will be both comprehensive and practical. Five plays will be rehearsed, and there will be group classes in production, acting, make-up, lighting and property making. Mr. Michael Macowan of the Westminster Theatre, producer of "Mourning Becomes Electra," will be the principal producer at the school. Miss Anny Boalch will give daily classes in movement and Dance Drama.

The programme of the Buxton Drama School, under the patronage of Sir Barry Jackson, will be closely connected with the Buxton Theatre Festival, and the plays studied under Miss Esme Church will be those being performed by the Old Vic Company at the Festival. Mr. Tyrone Guthrie has promised to give a lecture during the Course. There will be theatre parties to all the Festival performances. This School provides a unique opportunity of making a close study of professional producers and actors at work. Mr. Sladen-Smith will lecture on "Play Writing" and on "Adjudication without Tears."

RECENT BOOKS

Reviewed by F. Sladen-Smith

"I, William Shakespeare." By Leslie Hotson. Cape. 12s. 6d.

"The Amateur Stage." By F. F. Brotherton and A. R. Hobbs. Oxford University Press. 5s.

"Original Tyrolean Costumes." Herbert Reichner 3s.

"Van Gogh." By Dan Burke. Constable. 2s. 6d.

".... Told by an Idiot." By Evelyn Kingswood. Wessex Press. 2s. 6d.

"Apron Strings." By D. Mackenzie Usill. Tinsley & Co. 2s. 6d.

"The Wolves." By Romain Rolland. English Version by Barratt H. Clark. Random House. 75 cents.

"Penny Wise." By Jean Ferguson Black. Dramatists Play Service. 75 cents.

"And Now Good Bye." By Philip Howard. Dramatists Play Service. 75 cents.

"The Best One-Act Plays of 1937." Selected by J. W. Marriott. Harparr. 7s. 6d.

"Mrs. Whipple's Husband." By Mabel Constanduros. "It's All One." By Bryn Chalmers. French. 1s. each.

"The Two Brothers." Adapted from Grimm by Rosalind Vallance. "Someone" and "The Mouse, the Bird, and the Sausage." By Rosalind Vallance. The Paternoster Series. 1s. each.

"Alice in Wonderland." Arranged by Mary Schofield. Nelson. 1s.

"Sinus Tone Production." By Ernest G. White. Dent. 7s. 6d.

"Speech Training for Infants." By Hilda E. King. Nelson. (No price given).

"How to Speak." By Adrian Harley. Relfe Brothers. 1s.

"Speech and Movement." By Rev. Claude Tickell. Swindon Press. 4d.

"A Poetry Speaking Anthology." Books I and II. Both chosen and Edited by Hilda Adams and Anne Crossdell. Methuen. Book I, 1s. 4d.; Book II, 1s. 6d.

"Queen Elizabeth, the Revels Office and Edmund Tilney." By Frederick S. Boas. Oxford University Press. 1s. 6d.

"Vic-Wells. The Work of Lilian Baylis." Edited by Harcourt Williams. Cobden-Sanderson. 10s. 6d.

"The Amateur Stage." By F. F. Brotherton and A. R. Hobbs. Oxford University Press. 5s.

"Original Tyrolean Costumes." Herbert Reichner 3s.

"Van Gogh." By Dan Burke. Constable. 2s. 6d.

".... Told by an Idiot." By Evelyn Kingswood. Wessex Press. 2s. 6d.

"Apron Strings." By D. Mackenzie Usill. Tinsley & Co. 2s. 6d.

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problem. But despite ingenious guess-work, a good many mysteries remain. Among interesting chapters are the ones showing Shakespeare's connections with some of the conspirators of the Gunpowder plot, and the one in which Dr. Hotson marshals fresh proofs to prove that the "W.S." mentioned in "Willoblie His Advise" is Shakespeare himself. It is a book as confused and tumultuous as the fiery period of which it treats, but, written in a racy style, it usually manages to escape dullness.

"The Amateur Stage" by F. F. Brotherton and A. R. Hobbs, deals very competently with the problems of production, acting, settings, lighting, costumes, make-up and choosing plays, with special reference to drama in the schools. As it is inevitable that much of the clearly written and excellent advice has already appeared in various forms in innumerable books on production (although the authors in their short preface scarcely seem to think so) the book's main distinction lies in the attention given to school work—in fact, we can think of no better present to a teacher, immersed in the exciting but peculiarly difficult task of preparing a school play, than this little volume.

"Original Tyrolean Costumes" shows most of the traditional peasant costumes of Austria from examples in private and public collections. In a tiny preface it is suggested that as the Tyrolean vogue has achieved universal success, the styles depicted may be a useful basis for designing distinctive costumes for every-day wear. The drawings are decoratively sensitive, and delicately coloured; and it is quite inkeeping with their prim dignity that no less a person than a Baron should, at the beginning, wish the little book God speed.

There are several long plays in this month's list. Mr. Dan Burke's "Van Gogh," for eighteen men and four women, when first produced in 1937, received, according to extracts given, laudatory press notices, with which we find it difficult to agree. Van Gogh's life, like his paintings, was turbulent and volcanic enough, but although we are shown most of the stages of his career, from his preaching to miners to his suicide at Auvers, the play lacks vitality and much of the dialogue seems a little stilted. No doubt, a talented actor, by studying not only this play but all that is now known of the painter, could make a good thing of the title part.

".... Told by an Idiot," by Miss Evelyn Kingswood, has the advantage of a strong recommendation by Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth, who writes an appreciative foreword. It is chiefly for four men and four women, and takes place in the country during the period from 1914 to 1919. To those who remember the last war with its increasing tension and endless calls for sacrifice, most of the scenes will be terribly familiar, and the final tragedy, the poisoning by Roma of her husband, to save him from the trenches, is led up to by a skilful manipulation of the over-strained atmosphere. "Apron Strings" by Mr. D. Mackenzie Usill, for six men and four women, is very different. A lawyer, a dean, a burglar and a divorcee, found a paper whose object is to stir up thought by attacking virtue. Although the scheme fails, all ends happily in the Limehouse inn where the action began. Some of the incidents and characterization are effective, at other times it all verges on the preposterous.

RECENT BOOKS

Three of the long plays are from America. "The Wolves," by Romain Rolland, (translated by Mr. Barrett H. Clark) deals with the later stages of the French Revolution, showing how, in the mad lust for fighting and power, an innocent man is sacrificed without hesitation and elementary justice ignored. It is effective, but the characters appear bloodthirsty types rather than human beings. There is a large cast of men and one scene. "Penny Wise" is a comedy by Mr. Jean Ferguson Black, and is probably amusing when acted, as the dialogue is often spirited and the past and present intrigues of Gordon Chase provide enough material to keep four women and three men fairly busy, although the wisdom of Gordon's wife, Penny, is obvious from the start. "And Now Good Bye" is based on a novel by James Hilton. The Rev. Howart Freemantle, an English nonconformist minister, discovers so great an affinity between himself and one of his pupils that he decides to leave for Vienna with her. However, a convenient railway accident kills the girl and transforms Freemantle into a hero in the eyes of his flock. For five men and seven women, it is a sombre piece, but not uninteresting.

"The Best One-Act Plays of 1937" again emphasises the present taste for serious work. Unless the superb "Little David" by Marc Connelly (omitted from the production of "Green Pastures," but containing to the full the compelling charm of that masterpiece) can be called a comedy, there is only one play, "The Bear's Nest," which is uniformly amusing, although Mr. Brighouse's study of suburban pretensions, "Albert Gates," contains a certain amount of bitter laughter. Mr. Sydney Box's play for an all-women cast, "Bring me my Bow," is reproduced again, but we consider the author has written better work; and Mr. Rubinstein's "Prelude to a Tragedy" consists of an interesting conversation between Hamlet and Ophelia. "The Holy Crown," by Miss Elise Aylen, with its mediæval northern Italian atmosphere, is difficult, but could be made effective; "Apprehensions," by Mr. Mikhail Oklam, is a dream play, taking place in "the little hours when a man is unstuck"; Mr. A. J. Talbot gives us a workmanlike piece in "Tarnish," although we must confess to remaining puzzled at the end; "The Bread of Affliction" by Mr. Avrom Greenbaum, while belonging to what has been called the "whiskers and wailing" school of Jewish drama, will be powerful enough when acted, and Mr. Corrie's "There is no Glory," is a characteristic, but not very novel study of a war-time revelation. Mr. Vincent Godefroy's "Blessed above Women," is a strongly poetic, and in some ways, original version of the Jael-Sisera episode, with a splendid part for the chief actress; and the volume concludes with Mr. Evan John's neat study of the forces contributing to the Glencoe tragedy, "Prelude to Massacre." Two other one-act plays are both for an all-women cast, and both have five characters and are intended to be extremely amusing. Miss Mabel Constanduros' "Mrs. Whipple's Husband" shows the complications caused by spelling burglar as "bugler." "It's All One," by Mr. Bryn Chalmers takes place in a Women's Institute visited by an incredibly foolish lecturer.

"The Paternoster Series" contains some plays for small children by Miss Rosalind Vallance. "The Two Brothers," adapted from Grimm, with a cast of sixteen, is more ambitious than "Someone," for twelve children, and the still shorter "The Mouse, the Bird and the

Sausage" with only three characters. All can be easily costumed and played. Miss Mary Schofield's arrangement of "Alice in Wonderland" is one of the most workmanlike and sensible we have come across. The inimitable spirit of the book is in no way lost, and the version can be recommended for all types of juvenile performances.

Mr. Ernest G. White tells us that his book "Sinus Tone Production" is to be his final volume on the subject. In it the author's theories of the construction and correct management of the human voice are described in detail, with good-natured refutation of his opponent's attacks. "Singing not merely should be, but *must* be nonmuscular so far as tone is concerned," we are assured; and the chapters on the control of the "machine" which creates singing are clearer than might have been expected, and the section dealing with the curative value of sinus tone production is especially significant, suggesting as it does, new methods of alleviating and curing respiratory and nasal disease. Only experts are qualified to pronounce on the actual merits of the case which Mr. White states with so much zeal, but all concerned with voice production are bound to be interested in this account of a new system.

Miss Hilda E. King's "Speech Training for Infants" is mainly a spirited collection of games, exercises, rhymes and jingles, with the addition of dramatised and mimed stories and a note on the making of a toy theatre. The authoress frequently tells us how much the children enjoyed the various games, and we can well believe her. "How to Speak" by Mr. Adrian Harley is described as a simple, easy book, as indeed it is. Exercises are given for voice production and breathing as well as gesture. "Speech and Movement" is a brief treatise on "corporeal, facial and vocal expression" by the Rev. Claude Tickell, who informs us that the work is almost entirely original and should be committed to memory. The two volumes of "A Poetry Speaking Anthology" have been chosen and edited by Miss Hilda Adams and Miss Anne Croasdel. Book I is for infants; Book II is for children between the ages of eight and eleven years. Both contain suitable and delightful poems for acting, miming, two part, group and unison work.

"Queen Elizabeth The Revels Office and Edmund Tilney" is the title of the Elizabeth Howland lecture (an annual discourse now revived in a new form) delivered by Dr. Frederick S. Boas on November 17th, 1937. Edmund Tilney obtained his office by influence, but his mastership (which included theatrical censorship for the whole country) covered the most tremendous period of the English stage, and his conscientious nature (shown in his treatise on the duties of marriage and, later, in the carefully considered will) must have made his work valuable to the Court if not always to the players. Dr. Boas, once more, ably illuminates an interesting facet of the Elizabethan theatre.

The proceeds from the sales of "Vic-Wells," a record of the work of Lilian Baylis, will be handed over to the Vic-Wells Completion Fund. The fund ought to benefit materially as the book is extraordinarily interesting and well worth 10s. 6d.: the photographs alone would make it memorable. Edited by Harcourt Williams, twenty-eight well known people contribute articles of various length, and most of them give striking and sometimes astounding, glimpses of the strange, twisted, arresting personality who created two world-famous organisations out of almost nothing. Love-

RECENT BOOKS

able she certainly was, despite the celebrated meanness—which euphemistic references can hardly soften—and the equally celebrated sharpness of tongue and aggressive dogmatism—"I *will* have it," and after that there was no appeal. But throughout, it is obvious that Lilian Baylis inspired boundless devotion in all sorts and conditions of people, not only because she gave them a living institution to be passionately inter-

ested in, but was there herself, superintending every detail—all utterly different from modern enterprises, directed by soulless combines of virtually unknown committees. At the end Father Andrew describes, simply, the side of Miss Baylis' character which he, above all others, knew best. One feels it is a book "the Lady" herself would have loved (and laughed over), and that is the best tribute which can be given.

THE PLAYWRIGHTS' CONFERENCE

THE Playwrights' Conference, held at Easter at King's College, Campden Hill Road, proved a real inspiration to the 120 dramatists and would-be dramatists who attended it. The speakers, differing widely in their approach, were alike in kindly generosity, and gave unstintingly from the fruits of an experience which had been earned painfully enough. If one thing emerged more than another, it was that success as a dramatist only comes to those who can stand endless disappointment, can develop the power of self-criticism and can try again. Miss Gertrude Jennings' opening talk was humorous and thoroughly practical, dealing with the approach to the theatre through amateur work. Mr. Edward Knoblock spoke of years of experiment, disappointment and effort before true recognition in the theatre. Mr. Bax treated the relative importance of plot, character and dialogue. Mr. Norman Marshall gave most valuable advice on the placing of plays with managers, and on the relations between author, producer and cast.

Important ground was covered by Mr. John Hampden, who spoke on the approach to the publisher, detailing the various rights which needed protection, and giving very practical advice. This talk was appropriately followed by one on the help offered by the League of British Dramatists by Mr. H. F. Rubinstein, and Mr. Colin Deane then opened a discussion with a talk on "Art v. Expediency" giving the results of his observations as a publisher. Mr. John van Druten's talk on Dialogue and Character was brilliant, at once full of matter and of entertainment. Mr. Darlington's observations from the critic's point of view were most interesting. Lord

Dunsany followed an inspired talk with illuminating replies to questions in discussion.

Sixty plays by playwrights attending the Conference received a criticism, either written or oral, from Mr. Edward Lewis, whose work as instructor in the Postal Playwriting Course has already proved so valuable, and two scenes chosen for public rehearsal by the Harlequins under the direction of Lady Iris Capell were criticized by Mr. Norman Marshall and Mr. John Fernald respectively. This public criticism, inevitably embarrassing to both players and authors, was perhaps the least satisfactory part of the experiment. The work at the Conference was very concentrated, one lecture following so closely on another that it was not possible to allow a great deal of time for discussion, but all who attended it went away with their minds filled with fresh ideas, encouraged to further activity.

NATIONAL THEATRE ENDOWMENTS.

Continued from page 135

Rabindranath Tagore (Dr. Katial).
Col. Archer.
Liverpool Repertory Company.
Hereford Times.
Wolverhampton Express and Star.
Kronberg Castle, Elsinore (Madame Adeline Genée-Isitt).
Athens (Mrs. Mary Ralli).
Virginia (Viscountess Astor).
Royal Borough of Kensington (Sir William Davison).
Kilsall, Salop (Sir Charles Mander).

Full particulars of the Scheme and conditions of endowment may be obtained from:

The Secretary,
National Theatre Appeal,
50, Pall Mall, S.W.1.

INTERNATIONAL THEATRE CONGRESS

WE are now able to announce the programme of the Eleventh International Congress of the Theatre which, under the Patronage of His Majesty the King, and under the auspices of the British Council and the British Drama League, will take place in London and Stratford from Saturday July 2nd to the 9th.

The Conference proper will be held in the Conference Room of the Memorial Theatre (kindly lent by the Governors) on the mornings and afternoons of Monday to Wednesday July 4th-6th. It is hoped that delegates representing the professional theatres of most continental countries will attend, and among the Speakers will be M. Jules Romains, President of the *Société*, and from England, Sir Barry Jackson, Mr. T. S. Eliot and Mr. Iden Payne.

Members of the League desiring to be present at the Congress as visitors may obtain cards of admission by applying before June 20th to the Secretary of the Drama League.

The foreign delegates will return to London

on Thursday, July 7th, and on the Friday the British Council will give a Luncheon at the Savoy Hotel at which H.R.H. the Duke of Kent will preside. Members of the League may obtain tickets for this Luncheon, price one guinea, on application to the Secretary.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

DEAR SIR,

It would appear that some Drama Committees and Federations of Women's Institutes are still under the impression that they may obtain a Comprehensive Licence for the special fee of 10s. 6d. per annum, to authorise phonographic performances at the various productions staged under their ægis.

We thought that we had satisfactorily disposed of this matter some time ago, but we find it necessary to confirm that the Comprehensive Licence for the special fee of 10s. 6d. per annum may be obtained only by an individual Amateur Dramatic Society.

We shall feel greatly obliged if you will be good enough to publish this statement in your Magazine.

Yours faithfully,

PHONOGRAPHIC PERFORMANCE LIMITED,

J. P. CARRIGAN,

Secretary.

THE OPEN AIR THEATRE

READERS of "Drama" are each and all of them by now, I am sure, fully acquainted with the Open Air Theatre in Queen Mary's Gardens, Regent's Park. Though they may not all have had the satisfaction of a personal visit and an experience of its amazing fascination and picturesque charms, they are acquainted with its record of artistic successes and the service it has been to the cause of national culture.

This year will be the sixth in which the theatre has functioned. It is proposed to extend the performances over a period from Saturday, May 28th, to Saturday, September 3rd. For the first time in its history the theatre will attempt to provide for the masses performances of two of Mozart's operas—"The Marriage of Figaro" and "Cosi Fan Tutte." The plays to be given will include masterpieces by Shakespeare, Aristophanes, Goethe and Shaw. The Company will be even more distinguished than usual and comprise a large number of highly popular favourites. The producer throughout will be Mr. Robert Atkins.

As evidencing the extent of the public interest in the venture, I may note in passing that the preliminary subscription list totalled close upon £6,000.

The programme will be pursued under the direction of a Committee consisting of the following :—

The Rt. Hon. the Earl of Chichester.

T. L. Adamson, Esq.

Kenneth Barnes, Esq.

Clifford Bax, Esq.

Professor Boas

Galloway Kyle, Esq.

Percy Lovell, Esq.

H. F. Marriott, Esq.

Geoffrey Whitworth, Esq.

We shall be very pleased indeed if amateur dramatic societies, provincial playgoers' associations and parties of all kinds of not less than 12 can be arranged, in which case the prices will be materially reduced. Terms on application to 18, Charing Cross Road, London, W.C.1.

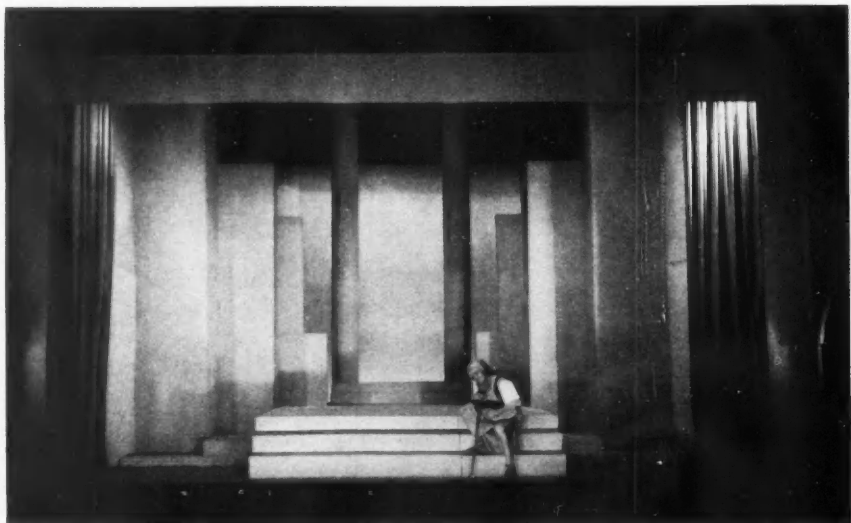
SYDNEY CARROLL.



Debenham, Photo.

SCENE FROM "AS YOU LIKE IT," AS PRODUCED BY THE PLAY AND PAGEANT UNION, HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB.

The traverse curtain was designed and painted by John Garside in water dyes on calico.



SCENE FROM "GOOD FRIDAY" BY JOHN
MASEFIELD AS PRESENTED BY THE POWER
HOUSE PLAYERS (AN UNEMPLOYED GROUP)
AT HEPBURN POWER HOUSE, APRIL, 1938.

MODERN PLAYS IN THE SCHOOL

By J. W. Marriott

A GREAT authority on speech training who has had a wide experience in schools of many kinds recently told us that we must "keep to Shakespeare first, last, and all the time." On the other hand, one of our foremost actors asserts quite bluntly that Shakespeare in school is "all wrong."

Frankly, I disagree with both pronouncements. If it is accepted that Shakespeare is the greatest dramatic genius this country has produced it strikes me as odd that we should "start at the top." In teaching any subject the logical thing is to begin with the simplest forms and to work upwards to the highest. In the case of drama, therefore, we should start with the charade and proceed towards Shakespeare as the ultimate goal.

A Shakespearean comedy has many difficulties for young children. It contains words that have changed their meaning or have become obsolete; it has allusions which need to be explained before they mean anything at all; it has a complex plot, often with three separate stories which gradually interweave; it is written in blank verse.

For these and half a dozen other reasons it is advisable to begin with a short modern play in prose. It should be so short that it can be taken entire in a single lesson. It should be modern so that there need be no interruptions to explain allusions and unfamiliar idioms. It should be in prose because the twentieth century has not that instinctive appreciation of poetry which was common enough in more spacious times.

It will be seen that I am making a plea for the study of one-act plays during the early stages. I am aware that certain teachers of drama will dispute the value of this approach, but apart from my own experience I know that the method has been tried in hundreds of schools with satisfying results. It should be borne in mind that the one-act play represents an early stage of the journey; it is not intended to be the destination.

Twenty years ago it was difficult to find modern short plays. Now there are hundreds.

Some of these are very good indeed, others are passable, but a great many are indifferent and many are unsuitable for school use. Still, to-day there are too many—so many that selection is apt to be embarrassing. The market is liable to be glutted with them. The competent playwright often charges a fee of a guinea for amateur performance and the teacher who is handicapped by lack of funds is tempted to choose a third-rate play because it is cheap. Numbers of plays are being offered to schools for the ridiculous price of half-a-crown for each performance. It need hardly be added that many of them are so crude as to be "dreadful."

Our ambition as teachers of drama is to awaken enthusiasm in the minds and hearts of children. But if we provide them with inferior plays because they are cheap we shall either create a dislike for drama which will continue throughout adult life or (what is much worse) we shall create a taste for the third rate which is so much in evidence among audiences to-day.

How can one decide whether a play is good? That depends nupo individual judgment, inevitably, and there is no single test which can be applied with philo-

sophical detachment. I happen to have the greatest admiration for Synge's "Riders to the Sea," for example, and regard it as a masterpiece. Richard Hughes' "The Sisters" is also hailed as a masterpiece, and probably it is; but I happen to dislike it. This business of choosing plays depends upon personal prejudices and tastes.

Still, I am not going to slip out of a difficulty in such an easy way. At the risk of stirring up controversy I will suggest one or two definite 'rules' . . .

Every play has an underlying theme, an obvious story or plot, and a certain amount of characterization. Every playwright begins his play from one of these three points. He may have a thesis to expound and illustrate. (Here he will unconsciously load his evidence to prove his contention). He may have an exciting plot to unravel. (In this case his characters tend to become puppets or dummies, moved here and there to meet the exigencies of the action.) He may be primarily interested in the characters themselves and the story will be evolved from his knowledge of their motives and instincts. This kind of play appeals to me most strongly. If the characters are 'real' I am capable of being genuinely moved by the things that happen to them; but if they are obvious puppets, coming in and going out merely to carry out the plot, I don't care tuppence whether they end at the altar or in the morgue.

Admittedly there are good plays in all three classes. A farce or a melodrama must be founded upon plot, and if it is well worked out I can laugh like a yokel at the one or shudder like a primitive savage at the other. A fantasy or propaganda play which derives from a theme may be done well or badly, but if the characters are conventional figures with one quality apiece the whole play fails dismally.

Another indispensable feature of a good play is good dialogue. In a badly written play the people talk in a way which is exasperating. The novice makes his people talk 'literary' English, for example, and the lines are often difficult to speak and therefore difficult to hear. Dramatic dialogue is very different from the dialogue of the novel. The bombastic speech which thrilled our ancestors in a Victorian melodrama excites only amusement in our day.

To sum up, the play to be avoided is the one which has a hackneyed theme, an ill-constructed plot, unreal people, and dialogue like nothing ever heard on this planet—the play which awakens no emotion except derision and makes no kind of appeal to the intelligence. There are a few thousands of such plays in the market at bargain prices. They would be dear at a fee of a shilling apiece.

So much for general principles. The choosing of a school play is rendered more difficult because the teacher has a number of other restrictions imposed upon him. He has to bear in mind the size of his stage, the resources of his property box, the expense of scenery and costume, and the human material at his disposal. He may wish to do a five-act tragedy in blank verse requiring a cast of fifty players, but he has only six or eight pupils capable of acting and his 'show' is limited to half an hour. He may like the idea of producing "The Dumb Wife of

MODERN PLAYS IN THE SCHOOL

Cheapside" but that will last 45 minutes at least and there is no girl in his school who could sustain the torrent of words which is essential to the play's success.

Certain plays are automatically barred through impossibility of production. Others must be dismissed because they deal with unsuitable themes for the young actor—the so-called 'advanced,' those which concern the mature emotions of the adult, and those which move on the thin ice of political or religious controversy. One teacher may thoroughly approve the intensely patriotic, ultra-nationalistic spirit in a school play; another may prefer a play which exposes the folly of war and the perils of rampant jingoism.

My own feeling is that we are too fearful of the 'daring' theme. There is no need to hush-hush these matters in the age of the cinema. In my opinion the gravest danger to-day is that of arrested development which causes so many people to remain emotionally adolescent till they die. There is no greater source of unhappiness, both to themselves and to their kindred.

The young child who leaps from make-believe to reality in a moment is completely healthy. He has no desire to remain a Peter Pan. He is perhaps over-impatient to grow up. But in the early teens there is always the danger of 'losing the way', of lingering too long in fantasy and daydreams, and ultimately of finding that the real world is a terrible disenchantment. Nothing is done to save young people from this danger except through the more robust sort of fiction and drama. The films cater for the lost souls who live on illusions and find comfort in luscious wish-fulfillments. A healthy play may save them.

One other point. The inexperienced teacher is apt to imagine that it is easy to act a "straight part" in a modern play—a play about schools in which the characters are mainly schoolboys or girls. It is far from easy to be 'natural' in such a role. The girl who acts the headmistress will do much better. For this reason historical plays with the right period costumes are often more successful. A boy with imagination can transform himself into Robin Hood or Sir Francis Drake but he fails to make himself into a credible schoolboy. What is natural conduct in the school or the home looks unnatural on the stage because the whole idiom is different.

Another advantage of period drama is that it can be done by one-sex casts. A girl can give a convincing performance as Bonnie Prince Charlie or Richard of Bordeaux, and I have seen an astonishingly good performance of Lady Macbeth by a boy of sixteen.

Altogether, the choosing of the right play is a complicated business which should be completed long before the class is ready to start work on it. It should be done early to prevent panic-stricken rehearsals and last minute hysteria. A school play, like Tom Pinch's steak must be "humoured, not drove."

LONDON JUNIOR FESTIVAL.

The Final was held on May 25th at St. Alphege Hall, Blackfriars. Mr. Jack Carlton gave a detailed and helpful adjudication. The Trophy was awarded jointly, and amid scenes of much excitement, to the Upper Norwood Y.W.C.A. in "The Flight of the Queen" by Lord Dunsany, and to the West Central Jewish Lads' Club in Scenes from "Henry V." A fine conclusion to a Contest which has shown distinct improvement on previous years.

THE STRATFORD FESTIVAL

OF the eight plays chosen to fill the bill for the first twelve weeks of this year's season, seven have been produced by the director, B. Iden Payne himself, with his accustomed sincerity inspired by a genuine devotion to the idea of giving Shakespeare a real chance to speak for himself without resorting to theatrical artifice of production trickery. Three of the plays "King Henry VIII" (the Birthday play), "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," and "The Comedy of Errors" are seldom produced to-day, and for a very good reason, for they all may easily become dull in performance. Fortunately each of these three plays have some special feature at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre to commend them, sufficient to make prospective patrons, not able to attend the whole repertoire, choose them in preference to the other five and better known plays, "Macbeth," "Twelfth Night," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "Romeo and Juliet," and "The Tempest."

"The Comedy of Errors" has for its producer Komisarjevsky, who has also designed the scenery and costumes, and with such unified and inspired production aided by some enchanting and sparkling music by Handel and Anthony Bernard.

The special feature of "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" is Jay Laurier, who invests the clownish servant Launce with all the broad drolleries of pantomimicry, without ever stepping out of the Shakespearean frame. The interpolated business is inspired nonsense, which, whilst new to a production of this play, would, one might dare to predict, be joyfully accepted by Shakespeare himself.

In "Henry VIII" one is given the opportunity of seeing the grand manner of Shakespearean acting fitted into the more simple yet scholarly methods employed by present day Shakespearean producers. For this, Phyllis Neilson Terry as Queen Katherine is responsible, and on the birthday night evoked rapturous applause.

There is an unusual spirit of youth about "Romeo and Juliet," as played by Francis James and Valerie Tudor. The scenery designed by Reginald Leefe is much more opulent than most and enables the balcony scene to be played more realistically than usual.

For "The Tempest" J. Gower Parks has designed a most effective impressionist setting, which proves to be unexpectedly appropriate to the acting, as the play moves much more swiftly than usual.

Andrew Leigh has reproduced a "A Midsummer Night's Dream" in the scenery and costumes designed by the late Norman Wilkinson.

Of this year's newcomers to the company reference has already been made to the success of Jay Laurier and also to Phyllis Neilson Terry, who plays Lady Macbeth in addition to Queen Katherine. Francis James, the best speaker of poetry in the company, plays Ferdinand in "The Tempest," The Duke of Buckingham, Oberon, and Proteus in "Two Gentlemen of Verona," with consistent success. James Dale, an old Stratfordian, makes a dominating Cardinal Wolsey and an arresting Caliban, and also has allotted to him the parts of Theseus, Malvolio, Macbeth and Antipholus ("Comedy of Errors"). Peggy Livesy plays with much charm the more picturesque roles of Olivia, Helena, a Courtesan ("Comedy of Errors") and Sylvia ("Two Gentlemen of Verona").

W. BUSHILL-MATTHEWS.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

THE MADDERMARKET THEATRE, NORWICH.

The Maddermarket Theatre, Norwich, is more than an amateur theatre. It is a theatre for amateurs in the strictest and most literal sense. The audience is an intelligent instead of an indifferent one, the players perform for love instead of for glory (no names are mentioned in the programme), and the plays are always of a high artistic merit and interest.

Their production of Milton's "Samson Agonistes" was particularly enterprising. The first time it was performed was when William Poel produced it in 1900, and it has seldom been seen, if at all, on the stage since. Conceived closely on the Greek drama of Euripides, it does not quite possess the impelling force of a Greek tragedy. The impending sense of horror and doom seems to be frustrated to a certain extent by the heroic glamour of Samson's strength and the tragic triumph of his death. Moreover the maturity of its sentiment—so full of political and autobiographical allusion—and the metallic beauty of its verse, make it rather a subject for the study than the stage.

The atmosphere and Elizabethan stage of the Maddermarket Theatre, however, is particularly amenable to a performance of this kind; and the Norwich Players, concentrating on a metrical rather than theatrical effect, poured out the words in a slow and euphonious stream. In order to avoid any inevitable monotony, the producer very cleverly split up the long and frequently harsh sounding speeches of the chorus among its three members and a youth attendant with which he had provided Samson; and but for an occasional concerted movement or speech the classical nature of their function was quite unobtrusive. Which was both a strength and a weakness. For though it produced variety, it tended to submerge the identity of the chief protagonists, already playing with great restraint, instead of sharply defining them. The undismayed strength of the erstwhile all-conquering Samson, the cowardly fear underlying the bullying exterior of Harapha, the blandishing allure of the semi-contrite Dalila, the self-sacrificing pathos of the aged Manoa, with careful delineation could provide great opportunity for dramatic contrast to the overwhelming catastrophe at the end. Fear of over-acting possibly restricted the players, and little attempt was made to delve too deeply into character. This was a pity. For while their performance was brilliantly and exquisitely executed, it displayed rather the patent beauties of the poetry, than the latent possibilities, if any, of the play.

PHILIP L. LORRAINE.

QUEEN'S KNIGHT.

On April 25th, at the Fortune Theatre, the Westmorland Players presented "Queen's Knight," a new play by F. D. Mott. It was an intensely interesting historical play, dealing with the early life of Mary Tudor and her love for Charles Brandon, afterwards Duke of Suffolk. We see her at the court of her brother, Henry VIII, where she lives a life of seclusion and dreams of romance, longing to give her hand where her heart is already given. The impetuous Brandon

with his daring and chivalry has won the love of the young princess. But Henry has other plans for his sister, which shall establish a stronger union between England and France and for the sake of her country Mary agrees to marry the old and widowed French king.

There was an excellent picture of the French court after her marriage to Louis. Brandon was a member of her escort to France and has vowed to serve her always and to come to her if ever she calls him. After the sudden death of the French king, Mary has need of her Knight, who has served her so faithfully, and the play ends with King Henry's consent to her marriage to Brandon.

There was not a dull moment during the three acts. The dialogue is modern and colloquial and yet conveyed the old world atmosphere which was also helped by the very charming songs and dances of the period. The play is simple and straightforward and yet dramatic and moving. Its sincerity touches the true note of romance. It is a happy choice for amateurs.

LIPHOOK DRAMATIC SOCIETY.

Formed in January, the Society decided to present a public production in March. This was in many respects a leap in the dark, but the 20 members of the Society all worked with tremendous enthusiasm to achieve a successful debut.

"Night Must Fall" was the Society's choice, and it was presented on March 22nd and 23rd, with Mr. Norman Pearson producing and also playing the part of Dan.

The result was something in the nature of a triumph, public and press both being very enthusiastic. A pleasing feature of the production was its smoothness and fine team work, the result of the splendid spirit of loyalty and keenness which exists in the Society. We are all looking forward with high hopes to our first full season, when we hope to stage two public productions.

C. N. P.

RYDAL SCHOOL DRAMATIC SOCIETY.

On March 31st and April 1st the Society gave a successful production of "Murder in the Cathedral" for two public performances. The main obstacles to a good School production of this play are the Chorus work and the difficulty of finding a boy actor to bear the burden of the play as the Archbishop. Last year the Society had a notable success with "The Rock" and once again the producer, the Rev. K. Vaughan Jones, is to be congratulated on the results of his hard work with the young chorus, who excited most favourable comment both in their united and individual renderings of the verse. In A. B. Hampton was found an Archbishop who was at the same time restrained and remarkably effective, and he received admirable support from the rest of the players.

The permanent set included a small apron stage and steps in the auditorium and combined with simple lighting to overcome most of the handicaps of a small stage in providing a fitting and unobtrusive setting for the whole production.

S. J. M. F.

NEWS FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

BERKHAMSTED.

The Cooper Players, of Berkhamsted, recently made a sparkling return to comedy by presenting Arthur Macrae's "Indoor Fireworks" in St. Peter's Hall.

Three of the most exacting roles were taken by newcomers to the Cooper Players. In Fay Compton's original part as Christina, the divorced actress, Patricia Annesley had the lion's share of the acting honours and kept up the right veneer of smart artificiality.

Monica Dwight's smiles and tears as Christina's mother produced some of the best laughs of the evening, especially when her "illness" temporarily made her the idol of the family.

Once again Mr. Ronald Shiner, the producer, extracted a high degree of acting ability and team-work from the Cooper Players.

Musical interludes were played by Eric Bayliss's orchestra. Mr. J. W. Yates was stage manager, Mr. T. Osborn arranged the lighting effects, and Messrs. Percy Jones, T. Mothersole, J. Moss and C. W. Blanche were responsible for the scenery.

P. C. B.

PLAY AND PAGEANT UNION.

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN SUBURB.

This Society will complete its nineteenth season and present its ninety-ninth full production when "The Merry Wives of Windsor" is staged in the Open Air Theatre in Little Oak Wood on 18th, 21st, 23rd and 25th June:—nineteen years of steady work involving five and sometimes six full productions every year.

Recently however it has not been so easy to command good audiences and too many shows have had a balance on the wrong side. This is having some effect on policy. Whereas the society has endeavoured in the past to present good plays which could not be seen in the West End, or had not recently been produced there, it is now apparent that such a policy does not continue to bring a big enough audience. It will be necessary to include in each season's programme at least one play which is well-known and popular and which will draw full houses.

The current season has included "Death Takes a Holiday," "Tod The Tailor" by W. Griffin, "Dear Brutus" and "See Naples and Die" by Elmer Rice. Of these "Dear Brutus" was the most successful both in acting and production and in popular appeal. It has been awarded the silver cup presented by one of the members for the best team work on annual adjudication. The Christmas show, "Tod The Tailor," though it included a fiery dragon, failed sadly in comparison with previous Christmas shows, which have usually been home-made productions on "Sanfairyann" or revue lines.

The society has always been fortunate in having among its members enough skilled producers and designers to make it unnecessary to bring in anyone from outside. The stage settings have been outstandingly good; mainly due in recent years to the ambitious but essentially practical designs of John Garside and Frank Watson Hart. A traverse curtain designed and painted by John Garside for "As You Like It" is illustrated on another page. All scenery is

made and painted by an enthusiastic stage gang under the direction of the designer and the stage manager. Costumes and properties are also designed and made by the members when it is appropriate to do so.

There is in fact no dearth of capable men and women for the many different jobs of play-work which go to make up a successful production; but in a London suburb it is not so easy to attract an audience in sufficient numbers to see the result of their work. The local resident has such a wealth of other entertainment at his command.

"THE SCENE SHIFTERS," SINGAPORE.

At the Victoria Theatre, Singapore, this society, (the dramatic section of the Singapore Y.M.C.A.), recently gave a production of John Drinkwater's "Bird in Hand." In all respects the production was excellent and there was nothing slipshod about the scenery which had a pleasantly solid appearance.

Outstanding among the actors was Mr. Thomas Hinch, who played the important part of the Landlord. In other masculine roles the producer was well served, and among the ladies, Miss Gladys Farnell as Mrs. Greenleaf, and Miss Betty Smalley as Joan Greenleaf deserve special mention.

H. L. H.

BIRMINGHAM.

We have received the new Year Book of the Birmingham Amateur Dramatic Federation which contains a variety of useful information concerning the 42 constituent societies.

The Federation itself looks after the interests of the Amateur movement in Birmingham generally, and has a Library and a Panel of Critics to its credit. Its activities also include an annual Festival, a Juvenile Festival, and an agitation for a Children's Theatre in Birmingham.

"RECREATION IN INDUSTRY—A GUIDE TO EXISTING FACILITIES"

(INDUSTRIAL WELFARE SOCIETY, IS.).

This publication, though intended primarily for member firms of the Industrial Welfare Society, deserves a wider public.

Drama enthusiasts will welcome the chapter headed "Music and Drama." Advice on the organising of lectures, drama classes, film clubs, etc., is to be found in an excellent section on "Educational Activities," and particulars of W.T.A. Tours to Music and Drama Festivals and Summer-Schools, in the section on "Holidays." Another chapter, too, "Legal Problems," gives much needed help on questions of royalties, entertainment tax and the licensing of halls.

"Hobbies and Handicrafts," "Indoor Recreations" and "Sports Grounds" are also dealt with and a great deal of useful information given on all types of leisure activities. Perhaps, though, the most valuable feature of the publication is the list of books and organisations to which the reader is referred for further assistance.

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